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## Article

The Druze District Governor Nasib Beik Jumblatt and the Ottoman Policy in Mount Lebanon

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the policies of the Ottoman Empire in the Shouf region during the 19th century, focusing on the prominent figures of the area. In this context, the Ottoman state's approach to the influence of Nasib Jumblatt, a significant political figure from the Jumblatt family, in the region will be discussed. As the Ottoman central government's authority weakened in the 19th century, the rivalry between the Jumblatts and Arslans, two long-standing families in the region, intensified. As a result, acquiring the district governorship of Shouf, where the Druze were densely populated, became crucial for perpetuating the influence of both families. For this reason, this study examines the political maneuvers of the Arslan and Jumblatt families in order to control the district of Shouf, as well as the activities of Nasib Jumblatt as district governor. The study will also discuss the manifestations of international interventions in Mount Lebanon. Finally, the Ottoman state's approach to the British influence in shaping Nasib Jumblatt's political identity will be another aspect of the study.

**Keywords:** *Ottoman Empire, The Druze, Nasib Jumblatt, Shouf*

## Introduction

In the nineteenth century, the changing policies of the Ottoman Empire in Mount Lebanon impacted the region's sectarian structure. The Druze community was significantly affected by this transformation. Although they had to share administrative authority with the Sunni Shihab family during the eighteenth century, the Druze, who had long held the title of *Amir (Prince)* in the region, had managed to preserve their social and political influence through prominent Druze families. One of these families was the Druze Jumblatt family, whose members long held the title of Sheikh.

The Jumblatts were able to control the political and sectarian transformation in Mount Lebanon by considering the region's internal and external dynamics after the establishment of the *mutasarrifate* in 1861. In this context, the Jumblatts sought to maintain stability in their relations with the Ottoman government and engaged in power struggles with the Arslan family, another influential Druze family in the region. The most prominent arena of this power struggle was the Shouf region. Shouf became the most important arena of power struggles because it was one of the centers of silk production and because it contained a large Druze population (Traboulsi 2012, 45).

Jumblatt bin Said settled in the Shouf district of Mount Lebanon in 1630 upon the invitation of the Druze Emir Fahreddin II. He later transformed this region into a political and administrative center for himself and his family (al-Shidy-aq, 1995, 162). The Shouf region, one of the first places where the Druze settled in Lebanon, was crucial in terms of the well-being and survival of the sect and, hence, for the continuity of the cultural influence of the family that would dominate it. For this reason, the region became a constant arena of competition. The Jumblatts first competed with the Yazbakis and later with the Arslans for the leadership of the Druze in the Shouf. In addition to controlling land through the *iqta* (tax farming) system, which was a distinctive feature of the time, the primary goal of the Jumblatts was being a leader or, in other words, a strong *muqataa* holder to the Druze peasants. As for the Ottoman Empire, Druze dominance in the region was important in terms of the loyalty of the Druze community to the state and stability. Therefore, apart from minor disturbances in the Mount Lebanon region, which included the Shouf district, the environment of trust created there also strengthened the state's relationship with the Druze.

However, the establishment of the Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate in 1861 led to a change in the *iqta* system, decreasing the power of *muqataa* holders. On

the other hand, the growing visibility of foreign states in Ottoman territories and the weakening of the Ottoman central authority began to push the Jumblatts towards different paths. From the 1890s, a political network of relations developed in the Shouf district, involving England, France, the Ottoman State, and the Jumblatts. Therefore, the administration of the Shouf region was not just about appointing a district governor by the Ottoman State. The activities of France and England in the areas where the Druze were densely populated attracted the attention of the state. The information provided in a report submitted to the State in 1887 regarding the migration of the Druze and the measures taken by the State, as well as the warnings from the state about interventions by the governors exceeding their powers, indicated that the Shouf region was an important example in state-society relationships. The report contained the signatures of six hundred and fifty Druze people from the district who described the atrocities committed by Nasib Jumblatt, who was elected as the District Governor of Shouf.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the ranks given to Shouf administrators from foreign countries also drew attention. In this context, it was necessary to appoint an authoritative figure to ensure regional stability.

Since the establishment of the mutasarrifate in Mount Lebanon, the Ottoman State has preferred members of the Arslan family for the district governorship of Shouf. Accordingly, six of the eight people appointed to the position between 1862 and 1915 were chosen from the Arslan family. Only one person, Nasib Beik, was appointed to that position from the Jumblatt family. Nasib Beik, who had complex relationships with the Ottoman State and the Druze community, served as the district governor of Shouf three times at different periods.

Nasib Beik Jumblatt remained in his first term for seven years when the Ottoman authorities became more familiar with his name. Although he carried out significant administrative and political activities in the Shouf region during his first term, complaints about him from the Druze to Istanbul began to pile up after some time. Some of the Druze who did not want Nasib Beik as district governor began to leave Shouf.<sup>2</sup> Since the Mutasarrifate of Mount Lebanon had become one of the most sensitive administrative units, the Ottoman State had to consider different factors when evaluating these complaints. Because other powers now had influence in the region, the state had to approach appointment issues cautiously.

<sup>1</sup> DAB, Y.EE, 104-55. 24 Shawwal 1304 (16 July 1887)

<sup>2</sup> DAB, Y.PRK. UM. 25-16. 1 Safar 1310 (13 August 1892), from Rauf Pasha, governor of Syria, to Istanbul.

The influence of France and England in the region and the relationships they established with different sects and prominent families constituted one of the sensitive points of state-society relationships. Indeed, Nasib Beik Jumblatt's connection with France and England had formed the basis of Sultan Abdulhamid II's political mindset regarding the Jumblatts in the late nineteenth century.

This study will be conducted under three main domains. Firstly, the reflections of the sectarian crisis on administrative appointments will be examined in a small area of the Ottoman Empire. The reasons behind the opposition to these appointments will be viewed. The reasons behind the competition between the Arslan and Jumblatt families in the Shouf region will be examined in this context. The Jumblatt's relations with the governor (*mutasarrıf*) and religious leaders will be reviewed to illuminate this rivalry's political and religious dimensions. Secondly, the political identity of Nasib Beik Jumblatt, who was appointed three times as the district governor of Shouf, will be discussed. Finally, the question of the Ottoman State's approach to Nasib Beik Jumblatt due to his close contact with England will be examined. In this sense, the details of the diplomacy conducted by the state through regional administrators, considering the possible disturbances in the region and the danger of intervention by England and France in Ottoman territories, will be discussed through the activities of Nasib Beik Jumblatt.

### **Appointment of Nasib Beik Jumblatt as the district governor (*qaim-maqam*) of Shouf**

Nasib Beik Jumblatt, the eldest son of the prominent Shouf leader Said Beik, was born in Mukhtara in 1854. He first received his education at Madrasat al-Wataniyya in Beirut and later attended the Syrian Protestant College, where he studied law. Thanks to the quality of his education, he was appointed as the administrator of the Shuf Sawayjani region in 1869, thus embarking upon his political career (Saeed 2021, 170).

During that time, the district governor (*qaimaqam*) of Shouf was Amir Mulhim Arslan. The Ottoman government had selected prominent members of the Arslan family for the position of the Druze subdivision under the system of two district governorships (*qaimaqamatayn*) that prevailed in 1841-60. Similarly, Amir Mulhim Arslan was appointed as the district governor of Shouf under the Mutasarrifate in 1869. However, following this appointment, complaints about his administration began to reach Istanbul. Reports suggested that Amir Mulhim incited specific individuals to seize Druze endowment lands. In addition, Amir

Mulhim confiscated some Druze lands on behalf of the state in order to provide income for the schools the state built for Druze children. Moreover, only seventy of the 150-man military units appointed by the governor for the Shouf region were on duty, and the Amir had discharged the rest and confiscated their salaries.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, Mulhim Arslan could not remain in office any longer.

In 1873, Mustafa Arslan took over the position from Mulhim. His increasing influence, along with the Arslan family's growing power in the region, was one of the concerns for the Ottoman Empire. In a report forwarded from Governor Vasa Pasha to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, *Nazarat al-Dakhiliyya*, there were many complaints about Mustafa Arslan. According to Vasa Pasha, while the 1861 regulations abolished all privileges of tax farmers (*muqataajis*), the Arslan family retained these privileges due to their long-standing control of the district governorship of Shouf. As a result, Amir Mustafa appointed officials from his own family to handle administrative affairs. His nepotism and policies intensified tensions and hostility among the Druze. Reactions to court decisions considered unjust were particularly evident.<sup>4</sup> Vasha Pasha had previously complained about the unfair practices of the judges of the majority sect against other sect members, and he made some changes regarding the authority of the judges (Akarlı 1993, 134). He also wanted to prevent communities from the same sect from being mistreated due to family rivalry.

In 1884, Vasa Pasha took steps to undermine the privileges of the Arslan family. Pasha considered the competition of prominent notable families belonging to the same sect. He aimed to appoint officials who would work harmoniously with him while ensuring that those who took part in the administration had effective influence in the region. In fact, the Ottoman government agreed to Mustafa Arslan's dismissal from office but did not want someone from the Jumblatt family to take his place. The government believed that safety and security could not be ensured if the reigns of Shouf's administration were handed over from one family to another, as such family rivalry would cause constant unrest. It would soon be understood that the central government thought that the *qaim-maqam* of Shouf should be from neither the Jumblatt nor the Arslan family. Ideally, he should not be from Shouf, either.<sup>5</sup> However, Vasa Pasha felt that appointing someone from outside Shouf might pose problems, and he considered it appropriate to select

<sup>3</sup> DAB. HR. SYS. 1947-31, 29 Safar 1329 (8 May 1872).

<sup>4</sup> DAB. Y.EE. 104-169. 7 Shaban 1301 (2 June 1884).

<sup>5</sup> DAB. Y.EE. 104-55. 25 Shawwal 1304 (17 July 1887).

someone from another prominent Druze family. Consequently, he dismissed Amir Mustafa and appointed Nasib Beik from the Jumblatt family in his place. Nasib Beik was influential in Mount Lebanon as the new *qaim-maqam*. Before he became the *qaim-maqam*, Vasa Pasha appointed Nasib Beik as the head of the Appeals Court in 1883 and *qaim-maqam* a year later (Basha 2010, 403; Al-Khuri 1908, 430).

Behind Vasa Pasha's choice of the Jumblatts was the indirect influence of the French consul, who had visited the Jumblatt family in Shouf during the early days of Vasa Pasha's Mutasarrifate. While the British maintained their approach to the Druze, the French also attempted to establish good relations. Using the Jumblatts, France aimed to create an alternative Druze option and gain a new ally in the region (Spagnolo 1977, 176). Taking this into consideration, Vasa Pasha not only wanted to prevent the Arslan family from becoming the sole political representative of the Druze but also intended to thwart the French attempts to establish a new ally. He believed assigning roles to the Jumblatts in the administration could help achieve this balance.

The Jumblatt family had maintained a close relationship with the British government since the time of Nasib Beik's father, Said Beik Jumblatt. Additionally, the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 had caused great concern in the Ottoman Empire and the Arab regions. Therefore, the repercussions of this occupation were bound to be felt in Mount Lebanon (Akarlı 1993, 44). Alongside his father, the affinity of Nasib Beik, who had been educated at the Syrian Protestant College, with Britain could not be ignored. The importance of this closeness in the selection of Nasib Beik was significant, as it would help counterbalance the influence of France and Britain and their growing proximity to the Druze in Mount Lebanon.

### **Reactions Against Nasib Beik and Political Developments Behind His Dismissal**

The appointment of Nasib Beik Jumblatt to the administration of the Shouf region marked the beginning of a new era. Firstly, the Shouf district was the largest district in Mount Lebanon, stretching from Jazzin to Matn and from the Lebanese mountain range to the Mediterranean. In this regard, holding the administration of Shouf meant having "*the greatest administrative position that the sons of Bani Ma'rouf could dream of*" (Yazbak 1983, 298). Therefore, Nasib Beik's appointment immediately initiated political reactions within Shouf. He faced initia-

tives that could jeopardize his position. One of these initiatives was a petition of complaint sent from Shouf to Istanbul in 1886, bearing the signatures of 650 people. According to this petition, Nasib Beik had appointed his relatives to head the courts and had managed to prevent the Yazbakis from taking office. Vasa Pasha remained silent despite these injustices because he supported Nasib Beik. The petitioners expected justice from Istanbul and demanded Nasib Beik's removal from his post.<sup>6</sup> The Sublime Porte found itself in a dilemma regarding Nasib Beik and, therefore, requested an explanation from Vasa Pasha to inquire about the situation in the region.<sup>7</sup> One of the matters the state considered was the possibility of foreign intervention if public order deteriorated. Indeed, the British and French influence was growing in the region, and European powers were interested in the region through education and political means. Therefore, whether or not Nasib Beik should remain as the district governor of Shouf was critical for controlling foreign influence in the region.

In this case, Vasa Pasha expressed his intention to prevent the concentration of administrative power in the hands of a single family, the Arslans. He believed that establishing administrative balance would alleviate the ongoing power struggles in Mount Lebanon since the early nineteenth century. In addition, he reminded the Sublime Porte that the *Réglement* of Mount Lebanon called for the termination of traditional privileges and expressed his determination to implement this principle to bring the region closer to the Ottoman center, even when its administration remained autonomous.<sup>8</sup>

Vasa Pasha's response persuaded the Sublime Porte to agree to keep Nasib Beik in his position. Moreover, it rewarded Nasib Beik by honoring him with the "*Order of the Medjidie*" of the third class.<sup>9</sup> While the Ottoman archival documents do not mention the reason for the award, it was clear that Nasib Beik had gained Vasa Pasha's trust. This trust may have been because Nasib Beik covered the expenses of the bridge built on Nahr al-Kabir and had a water source built in Baaklin, even before his appointment as a qaim-maqam (Basha 2010, 404). However, what mattered more was that Nasib Beik had the strength to stand up against the Arslan family and had a good relationship with the British diplomats.

Nasib Beik's district governorship opened a new door in the rivalry be-

<sup>6</sup> DAB. Y.EE. 104-55 /1, 23 Shaban 1304 ( 17 May 1887)

<sup>7</sup> DAB. Y.EE. 104-55 /2, 25 Shawwal 1304 ( 17 July 1887)

<sup>8</sup> DAB. Y.EE. 104- 115

<sup>9</sup> DAB. IDH. 1137 - 88738

tween the Jumblatt and Arslan families. As the first member of the Jumblatt family to acquire this position, Nasib Beik entered an administrative power struggle with the Arslan family, from whose ranks the *qaim-maqam* of Shouf emerged for thirty years uninterrupted. One of the outcomes of this struggle was Amir Mustafa Arslan's agitation of the people of Shouf against Governor Vasa Pasha until 1890. Considering these reactions, the state initiated efforts to send Mustafa Arslan to Tripoli (Trablousgharb) so as not to affect the public further.<sup>10</sup> However, they also understood that Nasib Beik could not continue in his position. The events had gone beyond the dimension of the competition between the Arslans and the Jumblatts and had led to the mobilization of the Druze people living in Shouf. Information reaching Istanbul suggested that the Druze were leaving or preparing to leave Shouf and migrating to Haouran. The Governor of Syria, Rauf Pasha, indicated that this migration would cause trouble in Haouran and requested a decision regarding Nasib Beik as soon as possible.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, during that time, there had been uprisings among the Druze in Haouran, which persisted until 1893 (Samur 1994, 407). In such a complicated situation, according to Rauf Pasha, no one wanted the Druze coming from Mount Lebanon to create new disturbances. In addition, the Druze leaders who had lost their power in Mount Lebanon might want to regain influence in Haouran. At this point, migration would disrupt demographic balances and create new political influences. Furthermore, another warning came from Muhammed Emin Efendi to the government about the possible dangers arising from migrating the Druze of Mount Lebanon to Haouran. He stated that the Druze people who were not affiliated with the Jumblatt family hated Nasib Beik and thus were leaving Shouf. According to Muhammed Emin Efendi, the Maronites would come one step closer to achieving regional independence if the Druze left Mount Lebanon. If the demographic balance shifted against the Druze, it could lead to renewed conflicts with the Maronites, and the Druze might be unable to return to their lands.<sup>12</sup>

Muhammed Emin Efendi drew attention to another point that involved an issue the Ottoman Empire had not been very interested in until that moment. He declared that the Arslan family and the previous district governor, Mustafa Arslan, were Sunni Muslims. Nasib Beik, on the other hand, was a non-Sunni Druze and was unsuitable for the district governorship due to his sect. According to

<sup>10</sup> DAB. Y.EE. 104 – 97, 28 Zilkaadah 1307 (16 July 1890)

<sup>11</sup> DAB. Y.PRK. UM. 25-16, 1 Safar 1310 (25 August 1892)

<sup>12</sup> DAB. Y.PRK. ASK. 88-18, 9 Rajab 1310 (27 January 1893)

Muhammed Emin's report, Nasib Beik also had a close relationship with Britain. Therefore, Nasib Beik's dismissal involved a political, social, and religious issue, so much so that the issue gained an international dimension because of Britain's involvement.

For these reasons, Naum Pasha, who succeeded Vasa Pasha, decided on Nasib Beik. Naum Pasha blamed Vasa Pasha for dividing the Shouf district and disturbing stability. According to Naum Pasha, the Arslan family was ruling the region quite well, especially Mustafa Arslan, who was an important and loyal figure to the Ottoman State. However, Vasa Pasha disrupted this order and intensified competition between the families. Worse yet, the balance among the Druze disappeared. Therefore, Naum Pasha removed Nasib Beik from the office and chose someone else. However, Naum Pasha did not mention Nesib Jumblatt's sectarian identity. For the Pasha, who prioritized political reasons, it was not important that the district governor was a Druze. Thus, Muhammad Emin's emphasis on sect was not important for Naum Pasha or the Ottoman government leaders in Istanbul.

Naum Pasha's remarkable decision for the region was actually in line with the Ottoman State's initial preference. By choosing to stay away from both families, he appointed Qadi Said Hamdan, a member of the Hamdan family and a member of the Court of Appeals. He had also won the people's love in his earlier positions. For Naum Pasha, only this decision could ensure security.<sup>13</sup>

While Naum Pasha's decision surprised Nasib Beik, he did not directly intervene. Instead, he asked Druze Sheikh al-'Aql Muhammad Tali' to be the intermediary to solve the problem. Nasib Beik asked Sheikh al-'Aql to contact the Sublime Porte to convince the state not to accept Naum Pasha's decision. The Druze religious leader accepted Nasib Beik's request and informed the Sublime Porte that the Druze people trusted Nasib Beik and were safe thanks to him. According to Sheikh al-'Aql, Nasib Beik's enemies had influenced Naum Pasha and made him hate Nasib Beik. Therefore, the state was requested to act justly and mercifully and reinstate Nasib Beik to his position.<sup>14</sup>

Religious leadership was as important as political leadership for the Druze community. As a matter of fact, religious leaders who were effective in protecting the sect played important roles in guiding the community and meeting their needs. The Ottoman Empire also respected minorities' religious freedom. Therefore, there was a harmonious relationship between religious authorities and the state.

<sup>13</sup> DAB. Y. PRK. UM. 26-15

<sup>14</sup> DAB. HR. TO. 398 - 16 - 0

However, the Druze religious leadership began to split between rival families in the nineteenth century, and the Jumblatts began to have more influence over the Sheikhs al-'Aql. Regardless, Nasib Beik predicted that if a request from the Druze religious leader reached Istanbul, it would have an effect. However, the state did not yet have a sharp opinion about Nasib Beik's critical position and did not see the change of duty as a big problem. At this point, the state responded negatively to Muhammed Tali's inquiry and did not allow Nasib Beik Jumblatt to return to his position.

### **Reappointment of Nasib Jumblatt as District Governor**

In 1891, Said Hamdan was appointed as the new district governor to replace Nasib Beik. However, he lasted only one year in that position as the Hamdan family's influence was not strong enough in the region. As a result, Naum Pasha appointed Mustafa Arslan as Shouf's district governor, restoring the Arslan family's leadership status. Nevertheless, the Shouf region was also under the influence of the Jumblatts. Therefore, both the Ottoman Empire and the governors of Mount Lebanon had to deal with the competition of the two families over administrative positions. The report submitted in 1894 by Louis Sabunji to the Sublime Porte revealed the power struggle between the two families and explained the crisis the state would fall into if it did not take urgent action. According to Sabunji, there was great anger in the Shouf region against Amir Mustafa Arslan's immoral behavior. If the state did not remove Amir Mustafa from his position, this anger could spill over to involve France, as Amir Mustafa's opponents intended to publish a newspaper in France against the Ottoman Empire. This newspaper would state that the people were mistreated because the state ignored Amir Mustafa's immoral behavior as an administrator. Such provocative publications would invite the intervention of both France and Great Britain in the region. Sabunji held that a big crisis would emerge if the state did not take urgent action.<sup>15</sup> Louis Sabunji also recommended at the end of his report the immediate dismissal of Amir Mustafa and the reappointment of Nasib Beik Jumblatt, who stood out with his services as the district governor of Shouf.

The report of Louis Sabunji, a prominent journalist of the reign of Abdulhamid II, was significant in several respects. Abdulhamid II relied on the press and his press advisors for information regarding international politics and maneuvers against his rule (Hızlı 2022, 3). Therefore, the state considered Louis Sabunji's

<sup>15</sup> DAB. Y. PRK. TKM. 32-17.

letter. Still, it did not take immediate action regarding the issue. In this sense, Abdulhamid II had to follow sensitive policies in the Arab regions of the Empire (Yıldız 2021, 33). As a matter of fact, Nasib Beik Jumblatt's dismissal was also due to increased complaints about him. However, the situation was precarious then, and Nasib Beik's appointment in Amir Mustafa Arslan's place could have created complications for the government. A more suitable replacement had to be searched for, but this would take a long time. Because of this, Amir Mustafa Arslan remained in office until 1902.

Even though the Ottoman Empire sought different solutions, such as appointing Shakib Arslan instead of Mustafa Arslan, Nasib Beik remained a crucial figure for the Ottoman Empire, not only because of his activities within Shouf but also regarding his relations with foreign states. One of these states was Iran. In 1891, Shah Nasiruddin, who was the head of the Qajar dynasty reigning in Iran, conferred the Shir-u Khurshid order (*nishan*) to Nasib Beik with due permission obtained from the Sublime Porte. In addition, the Shah awarded Nasib Beik a Shir-u Khurshid order of the second rank in 1894.<sup>16</sup>

With this "order" issue, some remarkable points emerged. First, Nasib Beik Jumblatt had no direct political relationship with the Iranian State. In addition, although the Druze faith derived from Shiite Islam, it was an offshoot of the branch of Ismailism and not of the Twelver Shiism dominant in Iran. In other words, there was no denominational commonality between the Druzism and Twelver Shiism sects of the Qajar dynasty. Moreover, the issue did not have a social basis as the Shiite population in the whole of Mount Lebanon was only around 15-20,000 people. Therefore, Iran could not dominate the Shiite community in the region through the administrators in Mount Lebanon. However, the awards conferred by the Shah to Nasib Beik suggest that he and the Qajar dynasty in Iran had common interests. Hence, looking closer at Iran's conferring these orders to Nasib Beik is necessary.

In the Ottoman Empire, only the Sultan had the authority to bestow an official decoration, or *nishan*. Additionally, foreign states were required to obtain permission from the sultan before awarding orders to Ottoman citizens (Aydın 2021, 42). During the nineteenth century, giving orders became common and one of the indispensable elements of diplomatic practice in the Ottoman Empire and Iran. The medal of *Shir-u Khurshid* was the most frequently awarded order by the Qajar Shahs. The order/*nishan* was often used as a method to establish close rela-

<sup>16</sup> DAB. DH. MKT. 1778-90

tionships in the 1880s (Kiren 2019, 158).

Awarding a medal to an Ottoman subject had a significant meaning in Iran. According to Kiren, Istanbul had a distinctive place compared to European capitals in the eyes of Iranian rulers and officials because it was clearly considered the most important administrative center of the Islamic world and a kind of gathering point on the pilgrimage routes of Muslims. Furthermore, many Iranians settled in Istanbul and other major Ottoman cities for trading and other work opportunities. Bearing an influence on them, other Muslims and Ottomans who contributed to Iran's contact with the West were very important to the Shahs. The fact that the Qajars awarded medals to Ottomans engaged in trade or even to people in the lower layers of Ottoman society showed their importance to business with the Ottomans and the Ottoman public (Kiren 2019, 177).

However, different possibilities regarding the Iranian dynasty's bestowal of decorations on Nasib Beik come to mind. One of these possibilities is related to Iran's relations with Britain. During the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah, the British influence in Iran steadily grew, bringing about multiple changes in their relationship. The British played a pivotal role in turning Iran into a semi-colonial status and prepared the political basis for this transformation (Karadeniz 2019, 235). They also pressured the Qajar dynasty to weaken its political power and forced it to offer concessions to the British. The pressure increased during Nasir al-Din Shah's reign, leading to his granting of significant privileges to the British.

The British also pursued a policy to increase their influence in the Lebanon region. The rivalry between Britain and France in this regard was visible through sectarian divisions, which drew the British closer to the Druze community. One of the actors who played a role in British-Druze relations was the Jumblatt family. Indeed, Nasib Beik's father, Said Beik, preferred to approach the British for support. Consequently, the British government proposed the appointment of Said Beik as the head of the Druze district during the Two District Governments (*qaim-maqamatayn*) period in 1842-1860 to improve the British-Druze connection in the region (Jumblatt 2020, 477). Nasib Beik also managed to maintain the stability of this relationship. Therefore, Nasib Beik's return to the district governorship of Shouf was crucial for the British, and Iran helped fulfill this aim as a good intermediary. Iranian decorations awarded to Nasib Beik might also increase his prestige in the eyes of the Ottoman government.

Nasib Beik also received an Ottoman decoration, not as an Ottoman reaction to Iranian action, but upon Nasib Beik's own request. In 1894, Nasib Beik

sent a letter to the Minister of Interior (Dâhiliye Nezareti) explaining the services he provided in the Shouf region, both during and after his time as district governor. These services included providing land for the military barracks and serving the Mutasarrıfate without fee.<sup>17</sup> He requested his promotion to a rank higher than his current fourth-level rank. The central government approved his request and promoted him to the rank of first class.<sup>18</sup> However, Nasib Beik had higher ambitions than rank. After being dismissed from Shouf, he left Mount Lebanon and settled in Beirut, where he lived quietly with his family for a long time. However, he could no longer resist the temptation of being involved in politics. In 1897, he returned to the Shouf region to pursue an administrative position again.

Nasib Jumblatt's decision caused significant discomfort for the Governor of Beirut, Rashid Mümtaz Pasha. In a letter addressed to Sultan Abdülhamid II's private secretary, Mabeyn-i Hümayun, Rashid Mümtaz Pasha referred to Nasib Beik's meetings with the British consul during his stay in Beirut. The governor expressed concern that if Nasib Beik returned to Shouf, competition and unrest would resurface among the Druze in the region. Moreover, there was apprehension that Nasib Beik might misuse the political trust he had gained through his association with England for specific disruptive purposes. According to the Pasha, the state should consider assigning Nasib Beik to a new position elsewhere to keep him away from Mount Lebanon.<sup>19</sup>

While the Ottoman Empire held vast territories, it faced a crisis in determining the governance of a relatively small area like Shouf and delayed a conclusive solution. In response to the request of the Governor of Beirut, Nasib Beik was appointed as the district governor of Sidon in 1897.<sup>20</sup> However, this appointment did not satisfy Nasib Beik, and the people of Sidon did not welcome their new district governor.<sup>21</sup> The Governor of Beirut sent a new letter to Istanbul emphasizing that Sidon was not a suitable region for Nasib Beik. The Grand Vizier recognized that the complications associated with Nasib Beik Jumblatt could no longer be tolerated and removed him from Sidon.

In 1902, the newly appointed Governor of Mount Lebanon, Muzaffer Pasha, implemented a new policy that differed from Naum Pasha's approach. Mu-

<sup>17</sup> DAB. DH. MKT. 301-42-3

<sup>18</sup> DAB. DH. MKT. 301-42-9

<sup>19</sup> DAB. BEO. 1012 - 75884

<sup>20</sup> DAB. BEO. 1032 - 77367

<sup>21</sup> DAB. Y.A.HUS. 379 - 42 - 0

zaffer Pasha reinstated Nasib Beik as the governor of Shouf. Shakib Arslan, who had briefly taken over the position replacing his uncle Amir Mustafa, had to step down due to pressure from Governor Muzaffer Pasha. Ultimately, the Jumblatts took over the governorship (Atlıoğlu 2015, 7). The Ottoman state approved Muzaffer Pasha's decision upon reviewing the entire network of these relationships and concluded that keeping Nasib Beik in Mount Lebanon would be in its interest.

According to some researchers, Muzaffer Pasha was a weak administrator, so the appointment of Nasib Beik would strengthen him (Suveyd, 2004, 235; Spagnolo, 1997, 225). At any rate, the Pasha paid particular attention to the Druze community. He valued the influence of the Jumblatts and believed Nasib Beik would assist in ending the injustices in the region. Indeed, Nasib Beik was willing to support Muzaffer Pasha in maintaining regional stability. However, Nasib Beik could remain in Shouf for only two years. The persistence of complaints against him obliged the central government to demand an explanation from Muzaffer Pasha.<sup>22</sup> In his response, the Pasha stated that Nasib Beik fulfilled his duties justly and that the Arslan family incited the complaints. According to the report, the allegations of Nasib Beik mistreating the populace were baseless, and these complaints were made by the former Shouf governor, Amir Shakib, in Damascus, inciting the public.<sup>23</sup> However, the state also requested a detailed report from the Pasha based on the reinvestigation of the complaints against Nasib Beik.<sup>24</sup> Istanbul might have been unconvinced. In 1904, the central government dismissed Nasib Beik and appointed Sami Arslan instead (Jumblatt 2020, 540).

### **Nasib Beik's Last Appointment Amid a Changing Political Environment**

The Ottoman Empire was deeply concerned with reforms and administrative issues in the Mutasarrifate of Mount Lebanon until the beginning of World War I. Every appointed *mutasarrif* was involved in a new reform effort. However, given the relative stability of the Shouf district, they preferred to maintain the old traditions there. Therefore, Nasib Beik once again handed over the governorship of Shouf to the Arslan family until his re-election in 1910. Shakib Arslan played a significant role in the return of the governorship to the Arslan family.

<sup>22</sup> DAB. DH. TMIK.M., 139-30, 25 Zilkaadah 1320 (23 February 1903), DAB. DH. MKT. 753-411, 26 Jamaziyal Avval 1321 (20 August 1903)

<sup>23</sup> DAB. DH. MKT. 753-43- 6, 28 Rabiul Avval 1321 (24 June 1903)

<sup>24</sup> DAB. DH. MKT. 753-411, 26 Jamaziyal Avval 1321 (20 August 1903)

After Nasib Beik Jumblatt, Amir Sami Arslan, Taoufiq Arslan, and Shakib Arslan served as district governors of Shouf successively. In 1910, Yusuf Franko, who was appointed as *mutasarraf* in 1907, unexpectedly appointed Nasib Beik as the district governor of Shouf. Several factors stood out in Nasib Beik's last appointment. Firstly, Mustafa Arslan's name was also among the candidates alongside Nasib Beik's. However, the Arslans and the Jumblatts (under the leadership of Mustafa and Nasib, respectively) had reached an alliance at this point. According to Spagnolo, Mustafa Arslan realized that this rivalry had deprived him of political power for years (Spagnolo 1977, 237). Therefore, when Nasib Beik was chosen for the position, Mustafa Arslan did not object. This situation indicated a decrease in the intensity of the competition.

For Yusuf Franko, there were more significant reasons for Nasib Beik's appointment. Sultan Abdulhamid II was forced to reinstate the Ottoman constitutional regime in 1908 and was dethroned in 1909. The Committee of Union and Progress led these developments and announced the beginning of a new era for the Ottoman Empire in a different political direction. The initiation of the new era led to an atmosphere of freedom. As a result, serious opposition began to form among intellectuals against Yusuf Franko Pasha. According to Mount Lebanese, Yusuf Franko Pasha maintained an arbitrary and authoritarian rule as a *mutasarraf*, thus losing the people's trust. The political change in the Ottoman Empire needed to be reflected in Mount Lebanon as well. Those advocating for administrative reform argued that the system of governance, where powers were concentrated in the hands of a single *mutasarraf*, no longer complied with the requirements of the time. Therefore, it was advocated that Mount Lebanon should benefit from the new system that the reinstatement of constitutional monarchy (II. Meşrutiyet) introduced (Sezer, 2021). These initiatives and developments undermined the *mutasarraf*'s authority, and the Second Constitutional Era was the most significant political factor that stimulated these initiatives. On the other hand, Maronite Patriarch Butrus al-Hoveyik, who favored maintaining the status quo, thought that the new system would harm the church's privileges and disrupt the current order's stability. Thus, the patriarch and church circles were against sending representatives to the parliament. Nevertheless, the group that wanted change was able to prevail more than the Maronite church.

In the face of the opposition that formed against him, Yusuf Franko Pasha reacted strongly, rejecting the demands for reforming his authoritarian governance. Yusuf Franko Pasha's stance caused significant discomfort among the peo-

ple of Lebanon, leading to telegrams of complaints being sent to Istanbul against him. As reactions increased within and outside the mutasarrifate, Yusuf Franko Pasha eventually stepped back and accepted the demands. Shakib Arslan's process of becoming the governor of Shuf began after these events in 1908 (Arslan 2009, 14; Sezer 2021, 42). After Yusuf Pasha accepted the demands, he was forced to dismiss some high-ranking local government officials, including Taoufiq Arslan. He appointed Shakib Arslan to replace Taoufiq (Kılıç et al. 2023, 82).

One of the most important issues of the early years of the Second Constitutional Era concerning Mount Lebanon was the issue of sending representatives to the Parliament (*Meclis-i Mebusan*). The liberals in Mount Lebanon supported this because they believed Mount Lebanon was an inseparable part of the Ottoman Empire and did not want the Lebanese to be seen as foreigners in the Empire. The opponents argued that Mount Lebanon was a privileged province and, as such, not within the scope of the constitution. According to Shakib Arslan, both sides favored preserving Mount Lebanon's privileges, but participating in the Parliament would not eliminate these privileges; it would guarantee them. Moreover, participating in the parliament was the best way to escape from the "one-man dictatorship" in Mount Lebanon (Sezer 2021, 44; Der Matossian 2016, 118-119). This discussion also revealed the incompatibility of Yusuf Franko and Shakib Arslan's views.

The issue of sending representatives from Mount Lebanon to the Parliament evoked an international crisis. An article published in a journal that had begun to be published in France covered Ottoman politics and themes related to Ottoman Arabs, extensively addressing the issue. It stated that it was almost impossible to participate in the Ottoman Parliament without giving up special autonomy, and consequently, this was an international issue concerning the guarantor states (Sezer 2021, 45). The process that led Nasib Beik back to the governorship began with the order from the central Ottoman government to hold the elections required to send representatives to the Parliament. Nasib Jumblatt was the group leader who accepted, in principle, the continuation of privileges while sending representatives to the Parliament. Also, Shouf became the only district in Mount Lebanon that agreed to send representatives to the Parliament in keeping with the central government's instructions (Kılıç 2023, 80).

With Nasib Jumblatt's increasing importance, Yusuf Franko Pasha dismissed Shakib Arslan in 1910 and appointed Nasib Beik as the district governor, believing he could work harmoniously with him. Essentially, both Nasib and

Shakib were supported by the Committee of Union and Progress, but Shakib's opposition to Yusuf Franko was much more evident. Shakib advocated the complete annexation of Mount Lebanon to the Ottoman Empire. Nasib, on the other hand, was in favor of preserving privileges. Yusuf Franko agreed with him. For this reason, the appointment of Nasib to the Shouf administration was necessary for the mutasarrif to maintain his position and balance the region and the center. However, Nasib Beik's last term as district governor of Shouf lasted only three years, and he was dismissed in 1913 and replaced by Amir Taoufiq Arslan. In the power struggle between the Jumblatts and the Arslans, the Arslans emerged victorious once again.

## Conclusion

Mount Lebanon was one of the regions where the Ottoman Empire tried to re-implement its centralist policies. For this reason, the Empire sought to follow a sensitive policy to gain the trust of the minority sects in areas such as Shouf. Consequently, it wanted to have confidence in the officials it appointed to that region. Although the central government favored the members of the Arslan family in administrative appointments for many years, the changing political system in the nineteenth century made the state feel the need to balance influential families in the region. International interventions began to deepen along with the establishment of the *mutasarrifate* regime. The British and the French pursued policies that involved establishing good relations with the prominent local families to secure the Druze on their side. Therefore, complaints against the appointed governors from the Arslan family or concerning the implementation of specific regulations could also be backed by British and/or French diplomatic pressure. These pressures could oblige the central government to shift its support from one family to another. Under such circumstances, Nasib Beik became the first Jumblatt appointed as the district governor of Shouf. However, this situation intensified the competition between the two families and put the central government and the governors of Mount Lebanon in a quandary.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
Amir Mulhim Arslan	1862-1873
Amir Mustafa Arslan	1873-1884
<b>Nasib Beik Jumblatt</b>	1884-1891
Said Hamdan	1891-1892
Amir Mustafa Arslan	1892-1902
Amir Shakib Arslan	1902
<b>Nasib Beik Jumblatt</b>	1902-1904
Amir Sami Arslan	1904-1905
Amir Taoufiq Arslan	1905-1909
Amir Shakib Arslan	1909-1910
<b>Nasib Beik Jumblatt</b>	1910-1913
Amir Taoufiq Arslan	1913-1915
Amir Adel Arslan	1915

**Table 1.** *List of district governors of the Shouf region (1862-1915)*

The state adopted a policy based on loyalty rather than religious and sectarian unity in its relationship with society. Therefore, the sectarian affiliation of a Druze district governor was not as significant as his political identity. Nasib Beik was a Druze leader born in the Shouf region and familiar with the area, but he lacked political experience compared to the Arslans. Despite becoming the district governor of Shouf with British support amidst a tense political atmosphere, he could not maintain stability. Nevertheless, the Jumblatt family became as crucial to the Ottoman state as the Arslans. Hence, balancing these two families to ensure regional stability became pivotal for the central government.

In the Ottoman Empire, relationships with the subjects were not determined solely by orders from the center. The complexity of appointing an administrator in such a small region demonstrates the intensity of the state's efforts to maintain stability. Indeed, the sectarian character of Mount Lebanon was a

significant factor in reaching appropriate political decisions backed by solid bonds. Nasib Jumblatt was one of the important actors who played a role in state-society relations due to his activities and political identity in the region. Therefore, understanding his political identity also helps in understanding the changing policies of Ottoman politics at different times. Highlighting past political dilemmas and societal relations may also shed significant light on the present day.

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